



An Intriguing Life: A Memoir of War, Washington, and Marriage to an American Spymaster

Cynthia Helms

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From wartime England to Nixon's America and beyond, Cynthia Helms was witness to some of the seminal events of our time—Vietnam, Watergate, and especially the demoralization of the CIA in the 1970s for political purposes. Opening with her feminist “epiphany” in 1968 (the *annus horribilus* as she describes it) that led her to end her first marriage of 24 years, this memoir reveals a world where appearances always had to be questioned, where rumors and gossip carried the weight of intrigue.

Helms grew up on a farm in Maldon, England and served as one of the original Boat Crew Wrens during World War II. She came to the United States after the war with her first husband, a physician. Her later marriage to Richard Helms introduced her to a world previously known only to her in books, not just the physical world from Mexico to Fiji to Iran, but also the world of a spymaster who enjoyed the confidence of some of the most important leaders of the late twentieth century. Her time as the ambassador's wife in Tehran on the eve of the Iranian Revolution is especially telling, as she witnesses the charming but deeply flawed Shah slowly lose his way with his own people. Her “inside the beltway” observations are no less captivating, especially when her husband was being vilified by ambitious congressmen for events that happened long ago and far away and in a completely different national security context. Fascinating and highly readable, *An Intriguing Life* is a window to our most recent history.

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